

Atlanta Legal Aid Society's Attorney II Program

Atlanta Legal Aid created the Attorney II program premised on the idea that at a certain point in their careers, lawyers can be doing more than handling their regular casework in a routine way. We expect that our experienced attorneys will continue to handle caseloads, and, in fact, that they will improve the quality of their work on their regular cases. But we also want to encourage them to take on other roles which will improve the quality of work of others in the program. The Attorney II program tries to identify roles which meet the needs of the program and which also respond to the professional and personal interests of our more experienced lawyers.

A wide variety of activities qualify an attorney to be Attorney II. The program is not aimed at recognizing only those attorneys that handle significant litigation. The criteria for eligibility are attached.

Lawyers are allowed to apply for Attorney II status going into their 6th year. In their 5th year, they are encouraged to work with their Managing Attorney to take on Attorney II type responsibilities. Attorneys coming to the program with more than 5 years of experience usually wait about a year to apply for Attorney II, unless they are specifically hired to do Attorney II functions.

The Attorney II salary scale is different and higher than the Attorney I scale. In the 6th year, the salary differential is \$1800. Thereafter, the Attorney II scale provides for increases every year, while the Attorney I scale has increases every other and then every third year. For that reason the differential becomes greater in later years. In the 10th year, the difference is \$5,200, and in the 15th year it is \$10,200. In addition the Attorney I scale is capped in the 17th year; there is no cap on the Attorney II scale.

Lawyers apply for Attorney II by submitting a memo to the Director, Director of Litigation and to their Managing Attorney setting forth the activities that they have performed which would qualify them to be Attorney II. Attorneys must demonstrate that they have already been doing these additional activities and not that they promise to do them in the future.

The Director, Director of Litigation and Managing Attorney then meet with the attorney and review and flesh out the memo. In that meeting the participants also consider other types of Attorney II activities the attorney could perform. The purpose of the meeting is to try to create a plan which meets the needs of the program, but which also uses the lawyer's individual strengths and meets his or her individual interests.

The Director, Director of Litigation and Managing Attorney then decide if the Attorney has met the Attorney II criteria. If the Attorney has met Attorney II, they also decide on an Attorney II plan for future work. If the Attorney has not met Attorney II, they usually develop a plan to guide the attorney in making a later

application.

The Director informs the attorney of the decision. If the attorney has made Attorney II, the Director confirms that with a memo which also sets out a plan for maintaining that status. While many of the activities in the plan are continuations of what the lawyer has been doing, often new activities are added. The attorney is also given an opportunity to suggest changes, although the elements of the plan have normally already been fully discussed in the meeting.

If the attorney has not made Attorney II, the Director confirms that with a memo, which ordinarily sets out a plan which if followed would make that attorney eligible for Attorney II status. The lawyer is also given an opportunity to suggest changes in the proposed plan. The lawyer may petition for Attorney II status again in the future.

As of the end of 2001, every lawyer who has applied for Attorney II has made that status, although only about half the time on the first attempt. There are presently a few attorneys who are eligible, but have not applied.